

[Mr. T. Balaji Rao Nayudu] [6th February 1923]

of the district board, as far as my experience goes, to reconsider the subjects which have already been settled. Once in a year, any member can bring in a resolution, and of course if the resolution is carried by the majority, the gate has to be closed. If we are to allow that kind of business for the purpose of allowing self-government to go on, I am afraid all the toll-gates will be starved. To avoid that tendency I want to bring a proposition that we may tax carts throughout the district. In the Act as it is, there is no provision to charge the carts whether they pass through the gates or not. With these remarks I support the motion."

Mr. T. ARUMAINATHA PILLAI:—"I move that the question be now put."

The motion for closure was put and carried.

The original motion was then put to the House and carried.

The Secretary then read the title of the Bill.

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL:—"I now move, Sir, that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee consisting of the hon. Members who constitute the committee appointed in connexion with the other Bill."

The hon. Rai Bahadur K. VENKATAREDDI NAYUDU:—"I second it."

The motion was put and carried.

VII

MOTIONS ON MATTERS OF GENERAL PUBLIC INTEREST.

The Council resumed consideration of motions on matters of general public interest.

Committee to investigate into grievances of ryots in respect of forest reserves adjoining villages.

Mr. B. MUNISWAMI NAYUDU:—"Sir, I beg to move—

48. *That this Council recommends to the Government that a committee of which not less than two-thirds shall be non-officials be constituted for each district to investigate all cases where forest reserves lie within a mile of either the village-site or the cultivated area of a village and to make recommendations to Government suggesting either the disafforestation of such areas or other suitable action to be taken to redress the grievances of ryots.*

"Sir, the House will remember that last year, in August, a resolution was passed that all forest areas lying within a mile from the village or cultivated area should be disafforested. That resolution was not accepted by the Government, and a Government Order was issued in the following terms:

The Government are unable to accept the principle that proximity to occupied areas within one mile, *as such*, should justify disafforestation. Where specific instances are brought to notice, and it can be shown *prima facie* that proximity causes hardship, the Government will be ready to institute the necessary inquiries and give redress if possible. One form of redress which in such cases may be considered will be to convert forest areas in proximity to occupied areas into (class V) panchayat forests, provided that the nature of the forest and the general conditions and general interests of the people justify this change.

"Sir, this House made it clear in accepting the resolution last year that the proximity of these reserves to villages and to occupied land itself constituted a source of grievance to the people, and by reason of the contact it was possible for the forest subordinates, who even according to the Fores:

6th February 1923] [Mr. B. Muniswami Nayudu]

Committee's report are notoriously corrupt to do any amount of evil to the people. But the Government say that as such it will not constitute a grievance, that it will be open to anybody to bring to the notice of Government specific cases and that then the Government will deal with them. My case is that proximity itself has been the main source of grievance to the villagers. It is clear from the recommendations of the Forest Committee which was appointed in 1912 under the presidency of Mr. Horne and of which two hon. Members of this House—Diwan Bahadurs Ramachandra Rao and Kesava Pillai—were also members. At page 36 of the report—paragraph 19—it is stated :

(1) Whether the existing system of charging fees for grazing affords ground directly or indirectly for any legitimate grievance and if so, of what nature?

The grievances are numerous. They are mostly due to the proximity of the less valuable reserves to villages and cultivation, and to the insufficiently supervised contact of the minor Forest establishment with the villagers.

In no ambiguous terms, they say that many of the grievances of the people are due mostly to the proximity of these reserves. Then, I may also draw attention of this Council to the other findings in that report. On the same page, it is stated :

(2) Whether the cattle of ryots in villages in the neighbourhood of a forest should or should not have preference over other cattle in the matter of grazing?

The committee are of opinion that they should.

(6) What measures should be taken to limit the cattle admitted to graze in a forest to such a number as can be grazed without causing progressive deterioration of the forest?

The forests should be classified as suggested by the Committee. In class 1, mostly distant cattle will be grazed, and it is easy to limit the number to be allowed at each camping place. In class 2, the limitation must be fixed by the departmental officers, but the limited number of permits may be distributed by village panchayats. In class 4 the grazing of the area in its village limits may be assigned to a village for a fixed payment.

Thus their recommendation is that grazing must be assigned for fixed definite payment. They continue :

If the village cattle exceed the possibility of the area, the limit must be laid down by the department and the village panchayat must select the cattle to be admitted. In class 5, as a rule limitation need not be compulsory, but it is hoped that in many parts, the villagers themselves will enforce it.

(8) In areas where there are small and scattered reserves should they be retained or be handed over to the Revenue Department or to the villagers?

As a rule such reserves should be entrusted to village panchayats for a fixed payment but they should not be disafforested.

Thus we find that in 1913 when the whole question was investigated, the committee were definitely of opinion that the only way of removing the various grievances which by reason of the proximity of these forest reserves the people were liable and subject to, was that in the case of many of these reserves, they should be handed over to the villagers for a fixed definite money-payment and in other cases the matter should be left to the discretion of the villagers as to the number of cattle that graze and so on. But what do we find? There is the universal rule that only permits will be issued; and they are issued by the Forest department—by forest rangers. There is no definite fixed payment taken from the villagers. The Forest Committee also advised that panchayats should be constituted and as far as possible association of people for whose benefit these forests are intended and for whose good the Government proclaim from house-tops as loudly as they can that

[Mr. B. Muniswami Nayudu] [6th February 1923]

the Forest department is managing these forests, should be encouraged in the management of the forests. We find that from 1913 to 1921 a period of eight years has elapsed and not even 40 per cent of the last class—class V—have been handed over to forest panchayats. A schedule is appended to the report by Mr. Bles, who was put on special duty and we find that the total area of class V forests is about 720,000 acres. Of these only 315,000 acres have been put under panchayats. Of these 720,000 acres, one-fourth of it, that is, 180,000 acres alone are in one district, viz., Chittoor, and the rest in the other districts. The area in Chittoor is a very large one and yet not even two panchayats exist with a few hundreds of acres, and who is responsible for this? The Government have not been able to constitute the panchayats. No doubt, they say 'panchayats have been tried in particular areas and were not found successful.' Last year, I quoted the opinion of Mr. Galletti, the then Collector of Chittoor, on the system of panchayats in that district. He said that the statement was not true and that the forest panchayat experiment should be continued. My complaint in this House is that there has been no sincere desire on the part of the Forest department to carry out loyally the recommendations of the Forest Committee. This was a committee presided over, as I have already said, by Mr. Horne and of which two hon. Members of this House were also members.

"Then, Sir, last year, the Government came out with a proposal to constitute a special establishment for these panchayats. There was then a Government Order saying 'let us not try it in all the districts but let us try it in only a few' and they appointed one officer and six panchayat inspectors. We find that while there was one-fourth of the area as I already mentioned, in the Chittoor district alone, one panchayat inspector was posted both for Chittoor and Cuddapah districts and when I drew the attention of the Chief Conservator of Forests to this fact, I was told 'you had better mind your business. I know how to arrange these things.' I believe it is the duty of this House to bring to the notice of the Government that the way in which these things are arranged is anything but satisfactory. In these circumstances, being practically in a desperate mood that there is no chance of panchayats being constituted in a reasonable time and seeing that the recommendations of the Forest Committee have not been given effect to, I now come with this proposal for the appointment of a committee in each district, so that at least in the administration of these forests, the people concerned might be associated, their grievances might be known and steps taken to see that these grievances are redressed. In this resolution, Sir, I suggest

That a committee of which not less than two-thirds shall be non-officials be constituted for each district to investigate all cases where forest reserves lie within a mile of either the village-site or the cultivated area of a village.

As I have already stated, Sir, the Government Order not accepting the resolution passed by this House says that

where specific cases are brought to notice, the Government will be ready to institute the necessary inquiries and give redress if possible.

"The question is how to do it. If a question is put in this Council asking 'whether it is a fact' and so on, the answer of the Government will invariably be 'The Government have no information'. If we mention to them a case where proximity causes hardship, they will say 'It will be investigated'; but when it will be investigated and what the result will be we

COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE INTO GRIEVANCES OF RYOTS IN RESPECT 1743
OF FOREST RESERVES ADJOINING VILLAGES

6th February 1923] [Mr. B. Muniswami Nayudu]

cannot know. They will say 'orders will be passed' but we shall have no idea when they will be passed. After all what is the nature of the investigation? Can we expect hon. Members of this House to go about and to find out cases and bring them to the notice of the Government? And the decision may not be reasonable or satisfactory. If this resolution is accepted, there will be a chance of that committee which I suggest investigating cases of forests lying within a reasonable distance from the village or occupied area and bringing to the notice of the Government grievances, if any. If there are no grievances, Government will have the satisfaction of knowing that everything is all right. If there are grievances, the committee will be able to suggest to the Government measures that may be adopted for their redress. In my resolution last year, I suggested disafforestation. This is one of the ways of redressing the grievances. There are also other suitable remedies. The Government were pleased to appoint two committees last year, one to investigate the grievances relating to forests in the Coimbatore district and the other for the Guntur district. These with the help of the Chief Conservator and the Members of the Legislative Council of the district and also with others of the district have investigated the cases and orders have been issued in many cases favourably. This necessitated the Chief Conservator to go about. So, if only such committees as I propose are appointed, they will have the grievances elucidated and make proposals for remedying the grievances. I am sure that when many of the grievances are brought to light the officers will feel that they are real and that they can be remedied. When the resolution in regard to the Coimbatore district was moved, it was clearly stated that similar resolutions should not be tabled in respect of other districts, as the Chief Conservator could not be visiting every district. What I say now is not that similar committees should be appointed in this district or in that district. I wish that committees should be appointed in each district, and that non-official opinion is brought to bear upon the officials, so that there may be a chance of officials knowing what the grievances are, and the non-officials knowing what the difficulties are, in the way of Government accepting the proposals we make.

"Again, from the point of view of the Government, and from the point of view of this House itself, I should say that my proposal has another advantage. It is this: we have got a number of resolutions tabled, and sometimes questions also, about these matters. These are matters about which when we come to discuss here, the Government say that they have no definite information. But if these matters should be thoroughly thrashed in the district itself, many of the matters will not come here, and the agenda will not be so long.

"Then, Sir, as I said, there are many ways in which the grievances can be redressed. One method, as I said, is disafforestation. Another is that wherever the areas are so near and are fit for being handed over to panchayats, they can immediately be handed over to them. But it may be asked: when there is a special officer, where is the necessity for this? If I understand correctly the Report of the Forest Commission, they said that panchayats should be constituted wherever possible with regard to both classes IV and V forests. These forests cover hundreds of acres, so that the special panchayat officer will not be able to deal with all cases where forests lie near villages

[Mr. B. Muniswami Nayudu] [6th February 1923]

and which do not come under class IV or V forests but which come under class I or II. In all such cases it may be possible for these committees to do good work.

“Thirdly, Sir, I think the object of Government in taking up a large area in 1890 of what may be really called village forests, was the conservation of the forest area for the benefit of the villagers. If that is the object of Government, it cannot be better realized than by giving the villagers living near such reserves a voice in the working of these forests, and it is only for that purpose that a committee constituted on the lines I have described is necessary for each district.

“Then, again, I shall quote one sentence from the Forest Committee Report, where they say :

If necessary more lands were to be taken up and conserved and the natural growth supplemented by plantation. All these lands were to be constituted reserved forests under the Act. But it could not be too strongly affirmed that the chief object of the reserved forests throughout the country was to be the supply of fuel, pasture, small timber and leaves, for manure and litter. Grazing and the removal of forest produce was not to be free, owing to the necessary expenditure involved in conservation and improvement, but agricultural and domestic cattle were to be admitted at half rates, or, if Collectors thought it necessary, free.

Such things can be well discussed only in committees investigating particular reserves. In that case, the District Forest Officer will have the advice of the local people and this would go far towards redressing the grievances of the poor villagers.”

Mr. M. NARAYANASWAMI REDDI :—“ I have great pleasure in seconding the resolution. Sir, if there is anything that can claim the highest attention of the agriculturists, it is the forest question. This momentous question requires due consideration from this House, as reserve forests play a very conspicuous part in the history of the ryot. The ryot has to depend on these forests for his agricultural implements, for manure leaves, for the grazing of his cattle and all other facilities which agriculture requires. Cultivable lands without forest facilities mean bodies without souls. The present forest administration has brought upon the poor ryot untold miseries, as it is purely run on commercial lines. The appeals of the oppressed ryot have fallen on deaf ears. There is no rule or law by which the forest officials can fix compensation for the so-called forest offences. The poor ryots are prosecuted simply on the evidence of the subordinate officials. The forest guard is the complainant, and the forest watcher is the prosecution witness, and the presiding sub-magistrates have no option but to accept the evidence of these men and convict the accused. It will not be out of place here if I draw the attention of the House to the fact that it is here the evil of non-separation of judicial and executive functions is most patent. As many of the forest reserves abut on and overlap agricultural fields, the loss caused to the ryots by the depredations of wild animals is enormous. The ryots are not allowed to enter into the forests to destroy these wild animals

“ The present rules vest too much power in the hands of the officials. They can, on their own initiative, close any forest area against cattle grazing on the plea of converting them into coupes or felling series. The *Sanambakka* and *Panappakkam* reserves of my taluk, which lie close to the villages, were closed against cattle grazing two months ago in spite of the emphatic protest

COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE INTO GRIEVANCES OF RYOTS IN RESPECT 1745
OF FOREST RESERVES ADJOINING VILLAGES

6th February 1923] [Mr. M. Narayanaswami Reddi]

of the ryot population, and it was after much agitation and repeated representation to the District Collector that they were thrown open again for grazing purposes.

“Under these circumstances, it is highly desirable that a committee, such as is proposed in the resolution, should be appointed to enquire into and report on the measures to be taken to redress the legitimate grievances of the poor ryots.”

Mr. W. VIJAYARAGHAVA MUDALIYAR :—“Sir, I have great pleasure in supporting this resolution. My hon. friend, Mr. Muniswami Nayudu, and the seonder both come from Chittoor, and I come from North Arcot. I am aware that the grievances of the villagers in my district are at least as real and as deep-felt as those in Chittoor. In my district also, there are hundreds of acres of forest land, and most of such forest lands lie close to villages. I know of a case, Sir, in which there is a reserved forest lying between a certain village and its hamlet. The road between these places goes in a semi-circle round a small hillock, which is a gravelly soil, and there is nothing growing on it except thorns. There is no income to Government from it except, perhaps, the receipts from fines and penalties for cattle trespass. Across this field, which is forest area, there is a foot-path which is generally used by the villagers to take their cattle to their hamlet. This short-cut between the village and hamlet has been in existence for a long time. Now this has been declared to be reserve forest, and the trouble and annoyance that the villagers suffer from the forest subordinates cannot be described. People who take their cattle by the foot-path are charged for cattle trespass, and they have to escape by purchasing the kindness of forest officials. This state of affairs can be put an end to only if the non-official agency in the district is availed of. A solution can be found for the redress of these grievances only in the formation of an advisory committee. There is absolutely no reason for reserving useless tracts of land lying near the villages as forest reserves. Therefore, I think the committee as recommended by the hon. the mover is very necessary.”

The hon. Mr. A. R. KNAPP :—“Sir, I am sorry that my hon. friend opposite who has given notice of an amendment to this resolution has not come forward to propose it, because that amendment, if I may say so without any breach of confidence, was the outcome of a discussion in the Forest Committee, and with some hesitation, it is true, I was prepared to accept it, in which case I could have saved the time of the House for the discussion of matters which are more deserving of discussion. I do not want to be understood in the least as wishing to minimize the importance of the forest grievances which are from time to time brought up before this House. The officers of the Forest Department are perfectly aware that there are grievances. They are perfectly aware that there must be cases where the rules and regulations of the Forest Department conflict with private convenience; and it is the object of the Conservator of Forests to reconcile as far as possible private convenience with the public interest. After all, is it not the case in every organized society that you must have occasionally this conflict between private convenience and public interests? For example, I should be very much happier if I had no police to stop me at the cross roads or if no tax-collector came to take taxes from me. But we all recognize that this kind of thing must be. What I ask the House to remember is, when they hear the

[Mr. A. R. Knapp]

[6th February 1923]

Forest Department held up to opprobrium, when they are told that it is the most unpopular department in the Presidency, when they are told, as they have been told to-day, that the forest officials are notoriously corrupt—an accusation which I most strongly repudiate when we are told that there is no sincere desire on their part to carry out the policy laid down by the Government regarding panchayats—I ask the House to remember that it is a very difficult task that is thrown on the officers of the Forest Department, that they have to judge between private inconvenience and the very much larger interests of the public, namely, the State.

“Now, the reason why I considered that there were other items in our private business much more deserving of discussion than this was that, as the hon. the mover has already pointed out, this House has already threshed out this matter. My hon. friend did not refer to the fact that even before the reforms we had a debate on this subject in 1920 when Mr. Siva Rao proposed a resolution. We then had the benefit of the presence in the Council of Mr. Cox, and after hearing from him a very lucid and informing reply Mr. Siva Rao withdrew his resolution. The matter came up again, as my hon. friend mentioned, in August 1-21. There was then a very interesting debate; there were no less than 13 speakers; and one fact which stands out on a perusal of the debate is that there was a very great difference of opinion as to whether my friend's proposition as then put forward was feasible. His proposal was that all lands within a mile of the reserves should be disafforested. As we have been told, that resolution was eventually passed. The hon. the mover has told us what happened thereafter. He said that the Government did not accept the resolution; but on the 6th January 1922 they passed an order the terms of which he explained to us. Now he forgot to mention what happened in the interval. He forgot to mention that we obtained a very full report from Mr. Cox on the whole subject—a most interesting letter, which had been laid on the Editors' Table and which I should advise any member who is interested in this particular subject to read. I hope my hon. friend the mover himself has read it.”

1 p.m.

MR. B. MUNISWAMI NAYUDU :—“I thought it was confidential, otherwise I would have referred to it.”

The hon. MR. A. R. KNAPP :—“It was laid on the Editors' Table. Thereafter we referred the matter to the Forest Committee, a body consisting of members of this House whom we consult on matters of policy in connexion with forests. And it was after consultation with that Committee that the Government issued their final order. I think, Sir, that this detail which my hon. friend omitted to mention throws an important light on the process by which the Government arrived at their conclusion. The conclusion arrived at was that the Government were not able to accept the principle that proximity to occupied areas within one mile would *per se* justify disafforestation. But when specific instances are brought to the notice of Government showing that proximity causes hardship, the Government will be ready to institute the necessary inquiries and give redress if possible. Now, Sir, that I maintain is a perfectly reasonable and proper position to take and I am afraid there is nothing in the speeches I have heard which suggests that the Government should depart from that position.”

6th February 1923]

[Mr. A. R. Knapp]

"I do not propose, Sir, to follow in detail the hon. Members who spoke on this resolution, for some of them discussed matters which I am afraid are far remote from the particular resolution we are considering. There have been references to cattle grazing, to the closing of forests, even references to the separation of judicial and executive functions. My objection, Sir, to this resolution and my difficulty in accepting it is almost entirely on account of its generality. The hon. Member recommends that a committee should be constituted for each district. I do not know how many districts my hon. friend is acquainted with. Both he and the seconder come from the same area and the hon. Member who supported the resolution comes from the adjoining district. I do not deny that there may be cases in Chittoor which deserve investigation. But, as I said, the moment a case comes to the notice of the Government, the Government are prepared to inquire into it and take whatever steps may be necessary and possible to redress legitimate grievances. But I do protest, Sir, against the idea that we should set up, as my hon. friend the mover recommends, roving commissions in every district not to redress grievances but to hunt for them, for, that is what my hon. friend's suggestion comes to. Surely, one is entitled to say that if the grievances are so great as is complained of, it is surprising that persons aggrieved do not come forward and point out their grievances either to their representatives in the Council or to the local official. During a long experience in this country, I have never found the ordinary ryot particularly backward in coming forward to represent his grievances. The fallacy in the line of argument followed by my hon. friend, the mover, is that he argues from the particular to the general. There may be grievances in Chittoor. But it does not necessarily follow that there are the same grievances all over the Presidency, grievances so serious as to make it worth our while to appoint a committee in every district. Let me give him two instances. The basis of my hon. friend's resolution is that we should remove the forest boundary line to at least the distance of a mile from every village. I know from my own experience of cases where the reason why the village adjoins a forest is that the villagers work in the forest and want the forest to be near them. I do not know what sort of position we shall be in if we are going to remove the forest boundary and possibly force the people to remove their habitations. The result would be that the village would be always chasing the forest boundary."

Mr. A. RANGANATHA MUDALIYAR :—"Sir, shall I have some specific cases of villages being established after the formation of forests?"

The hon. Mr. A. R. KNAPP :—"A great many in the West Coast, where the houses are placed near the forest, because the inhabitants work in the forest and wish to be near it."

Mr. A. RANGANATHA MUDALIYAR :—"Any such instance other than in the West Coast?"

The hon. Mr. A. R. KNAPP :—"Then, Sir, there is another case. Reference has been made to the fact that a committee was appointed to go into the question of forest grievances in Coimbatore. That committee sat and it is a fact that two cases came to their notice in which the suggestion was made that the forest boundary ought to be pushed back on grounds somewhat analogous to those which my hon. friend mentions. These cases were examined by the committee with the result that in neither did they think

[Mr. A. R. Knapp]

[6th February 1923]

it necessary to carry out that suggestion. In one case, they say that they are not convinced that disafforestation is desirable in the interests of the villagers themselves. That is only an illustration of my point, viz., that the hon. Member's suggestion that we should set up these committees in every district in the Presidency is really not a practicable one. I admit that there may be grievances in some places but I have said, and I repeat it, that we are quite ready to enquire into any case of this kind which comes to our notice. I will even go further and say that if in any district it is brought to our notice that there is a considerable volume of these complaints, I am quite prepared to follow the example of Coimbatore and appoint an *ad hoc* committee to go into that particular matter. I do not think that we should be asked to accept the suggestion of the hon. Member and appoint at once committees all over the Presidency, committees which I now understand he wants to be permanent and not temporary. In my opinion, Sir, it is very much wiser to follow the procedure already promised and let Government make enquiries when grievances are brought to their notice.

"There is only one other point which I should like to refer to, and it is this. You are not going to establish these committees without a certain amount of expenditure. When this matter was discussed in 1921 one hon. Member sitting on the other side of the House urged the Government not to reject the proposal on the ground of its cost because, he said, 'the resources of the Government are so very unlimited'. I think we know better than that now. I am quite aware that the departments under my charge are regarded in the House as spend-thrifts and I think it will be inconsistent if hon. Members were to force me in this manner into incurring expenditure on such general committees all over the Presidency when in the opinion not only of myself, not only of the Forest officers, but I think I may say of a good many members of the Forest Committee, the establishment of such general committees is in no way a necessity.

"Then the hon. the mover referred to the fact that one solution of all these difficulties was to hand over the class IV or class V forests to panchayats. He is perfectly well aware that we are straining every nerve to do that. But the trouble is that the panchayats do not seem in some cases very willing to be formed and in other cases they are not functioning as well as might be expected. We have after many years of struggle made a fresh effort by the appointment of a special organization to try and push the formation of panchayats. And as my hon. friend is aware his district, Chittoor, is one of those to which that organization has been directed to give its first and earliest attention. If they succeed, Sir, in forming panchayats to take over the large number of apparently not very valuable forests in Chittoor, then, Sir, I hope we shall be able to satisfy my hon. friend and come to an end of his complaints on this particular subject "

SAIYID MUHAMMAD PADSHA SAHIB Bahadur :—"I am really surprised at the attitude assumed by the Government regarding the resolution which has been moved by my hon. friend, Mr. Muniswami Nayudu. Sir, I am afraid the whole tenor of the reply indicates the spirit in which the forest policy is worked out by the Government. It has been said, Sir, that the grievances which have been from time to time ventilated in this House and elsewhere are only of an ordinary kind, that they are of the

1-15 p.m.

6th February 1923] [Saiyid Muhammad Padsha Sahib]

nature of the ordinary conflict of individual inconvenience and public interest. But, Sir, I am afraid that it is not the right spirit in which the question has got to be viewed. In the face of the fact that the grievances are not particular to any village or district, of the fact that it is not one individual or two that is affected by the administration of the forest lands but that the complaint is universal and that the discontent grows every day in volume, in the face of these facts for the authorities to persist in their mistaken impression that the inconveniences occasioned to the villagers on account of the way in which the forests are administered are only of the ordinary kind which do not go to point out to an inherent defect in the system itself but only to the ordinary conflict of private and public interests, is, I am afraid, a serious error on the part of the Government. Now, Sir, there is hardly any department, barring perhaps the Revenue, with which the men in the village have got so much to do as the Forest department. For the purpose of grazing the cattle, for obtaining green manure, for procuring the material for his tools, almost for everything connected with the daily routine of life, the villager has got to have recourse to the forests. It is, therefore, pre-eminently necessary that the administration of the forests should be made as acceptable to the ryots as it possibly can without militating against the fundamental principles of the departmental policy. But the reverse is the case in this instance. We find, Sir, that the proximity of forests to the village-site or the cultivated area is, instead of proving to the villagers' advantage, a positive disadvantage. Evidently what happens is this. Large tracts of forests which lie close to a village are enclosed and set apart as reserve forests. It may be, Sir, and it very often is, that these vast areas contain nothing but thorns and do not for all outward appearances seem to have anything valuable either for the Government or for the public. But all the same they are very carefully preserved, very jealously guarded to the great inconvenience and discomfort of the ryots round about. Very often in these villages there are a large number of cattle and there is no open ground available at all for them to move about.

"So that the result is that the cattle of the village do not have any facilities for moving about in the village, and the portions of the forests which are set apart for grazing and which are very far away from the village, may not be quite adequate for the purposes of cattle grazing. Even though the cattle may need some open space to move about in the village, these forest areas are kept as the holy of holies into which neither the villagers nor the cattle dare enter. So, Sir, we find that the way in which the forest administration is carried on is not at all conducive to the convenience, at any rate the immediate convenience, of the ryots, whatever the prospective advantages might be.

"Just one point more, Sir. I do not understand what the meaning is of the expression 'public good'. If various sections of the community, if whole villages, if all sections of the population are inconvenienced and are placed under a positive discomfort on account of any law, I do not see how that law can be taken to conduce to the benefit of the public at large. The public at large are composed only of the various sections of the people who are affected by that law. So, I think it is simply futile to try to refute the arguments advanced from time to time in this House recommending a change in the angle of vision in the matter of the administration of forests by treating these grievances as merely accidental, and I am of opinion that the

[Saiyid Muhammad Padsha Sahib] [6th February 1923]

suggestion made in this resolution by the hon. the mover is one which is calculated to go a long way in making the forest administration more acceptable to the ryot."

Diwan Bahadur P. KESAVA PILLAI :—" Sir, I rise to express my sense of gratitude to the Government for the way in which they have been dealing with this question for some time. I also acknowledge with thankfulness what Mr. Cox has done and is still trying to do to redress some of the grievances brought to his notice. We may also express our gratitude to the hon. Member for his expressions of sympathy and for the readiness with which he says he will carry out investigations when grievances in any particular district are brought to notice.

" But I may mention that this is a change in the attitude of Government from what it was before. In the old days it was so difficult to convince the Government of the existence of these grievances. But now the ryot knows that the Government have come to realize that there are grievances and that they are no doubt applying whatever remedial measures they think proper, but we know that the troubles of the ryot still continue in many places, because the Government have not chosen to carry out fully the recommendations of the Forest Committee.

" I may tell the hon. Member that so far as my district is concerned, hundreds of petitions have been put in periodically to the district authorities, representations have been made to the District Collector and the District Forest Officer, sometimes I have myself made representations to the Collector—sometimes my colleague Mr. Sivasankaram Pillai; and I must state that the authorities have been pleased to disafforest some reserves. But there are still certain so-called reserves where you find nothing but prickly-pear and wild pigs. You find hundreds and hundreds of these wild pigs destroying the crops of the ryots. People cannot go in and hunt these pigs, because the area is closed and hunting is forbidden. I may mention one or two reserves of the kind for the information of the hon. Member. There is the Golla reserve in Anantapur district, where the Forest Committee of which my hon. friend, Mr. Ramachandra Rao and myself, were members, camped, made inquiries and heard complaints of the local ryots. It is not of any earthly use to the Government; it does not produce any timber. It is not even fit for grazing purposes because it is full of prickly-pear, and it only breeds pigs to the detriment of the ryots' interests. I know there are several such reserves which are all very near the villages, and the inhabitants suffer very great inconveniences. I applied to the Collector and he said that he would disafforest one after another. He was able to disafforest nine forest reserves last year. We know as a matter of fact that except in a few places like Muchukota, the rest of them in my district have only prickly-pear and thorny shrubs. It is very desirable to appoint a committee as suggested in this resolution for the Anantapur district and disafforest the worthless reserves which have been condemned by the Forest Committee.

" I would not enter into further details. I would say a word about the panchayats. Panchayats have not been successful in many places because the conditions have been rather too hard. Sometimes they were asked to pay so much and they could not get that amount from the ryots of the village. No doubt the establishment of the panchayats saves the ryots the

6th February 1923]

[Mr. P. Kesava Pillai]

worry and trouble from the forest guards and other forest authorities, but the imposition of conditions such as the payment of a fixed sum of money, and the responsibilities which they cannot easily carry out, will not make them a complete success. I would also like to mention to the hon. Member in charge that he should not be carried away by the idea that the grievances complained of by the hon. the mover and brought to the notice of this Council to day are confined to Chittoor district only. These grievances are more or less universal. If Mr. Cox goes into the matter of these grievances he will surely afford relief, to be helpful to the ryots and also make the Government a little more popular with the ryot population. I would request the hon. Member in charge to accept this resolution at least in an amended form to the effect that wherever complaints are received a committee should be appointed on the lines suggested in this resolution by my hon. friend, Mr. Muniswami Nayudu."

At this stage (1-27 p.m.) the House rose for lunch

The House re-assembled after lunch at 2-30 p.m.

Mr. A. RANGANATHA MUDALIYAR :—"Sir, I beg to give my cordial support to the resolution moved by my hon. friend, Mr. Muniswami Nayudu. I do so because the grievances complained of by him are genuine and to my mind many of them have absolutely no justification whatsoever to continue. The hon. the Home Member said that villages were springing up near the borders of forest reserves and that it was somewhat unreasonable to expect the Forest department to recede and recede when new villages were being formed by the side of them. I wanted further information on that point, and he said that such cases were common in the West Coast. I am afraid, Sir, he did not cite any district nearer Madras for fear lest his statement should be taken strong objection to by many of the Members present.

"So far as my district, Bellary, and the villages in it are concerned, it is the villages that are gradually receding and receding till they come almost to the utmost village limit. I am not speaking at random; I shall testify to my statement by one or two instances. Recently, I had to go to Kudligi taluk in connexion with a certain work—I am sure the hon. the Home Member will acquit me of any desire to put forth any objections or forest grievances—and there I found, Sir, that in many of the villages the people were complaining of the encroachment of forest limits into the villages. I tried to find out if their complaints had any justification. I found, for example, in the case of the Sankallapalle reserve that year after year the Forest department went on advancing and occupying even vacant lands to the great inconvenience and annoyance of the villagers. The reserves of Sankallapalle were formed in the year 1890. I take it that those people who first created the reserve took care not to be too close to the village, for they were aware that annoyance would be caused to the villagers. But their most enthusiastic successors in 1892 claimed an area of 620 acres, calling it an extension. Two years later this reserve was extended on the north and west and occupied an area of 457 acres. The department was not satisfied with this and the reserve was again extended eastwards till it included 792 acres. Just like the giant whose appetite grows with what he feeds upon, this reserve extended its claws, so to speak, to the extent of occupying an area of 6,070 acres. The result is that there are now a number of villages, which originally,

[Mr. A. Ranganatha Mudaliyar] [6th February 1923]

when the main reserve was formed, were far away from the forest, but subsequently, owing to the action of the enthusiastic and over-zealous officers, have been placed in a considerably contiguous and inconvenient position. Instances like these might be multiplied. The Cherubi reserve was formed in 1892 and an extension was made in 1895 with the result that the reserve approached very much nearer the village. There is again the case of Uppalagudi reserve, where, I think, by a subsequent extension, the Forest department managed to include within its limits a Muhammadan mosque, a Hindu temple and a well the use of which was very much coveted by the villagers. I brought this matter to the notice of the forest authorities, and I am glad to say they have since reduced the boundaries of the reserve so as to exclude the mosque, temple and well.

"Then, the hon. the Home Member asked why the villagers did not complain if such grievances existed. My answer is that they do complain, sometimes by letter, and more frequently in person. I should like to know if the hon. the Home Member is not aware that, when an officer tours round, groups of village people come and pester the officer for this or that relief. They are not literate people and they do not know all the formalities that they have to observe; but if such oral representations are not taken as complaints, I do not know what else should be taken. I think, Sir, that the formation of a committee of the kind suggested by the hon. Member for Chittoor will go a great way to afford relief to the people. For example, I may say this: in Adoni range the Forest department has classified some reserves as class I, which I do not think are fit enough to be included in class IV, and I take it that the people there have complained fairly often about this classification and the inconvenience entailed thereby. The Conservator, who happened to be a sympathetic officer and who went into the whole question, recommended, I think as long as over a year ago, that these reserves should not be put in class I, but that, on the other hand, they were so worthless as to deserve disafforestation. But then his report, I think, has been hanging for the last one year or more. A year or two ago orders were passed by the Chief Conservator disafforesting as many as eight reserves. I would like to know whether, if there had been a committee of the sort prayed for by Mr. Muniswami Nayudu, this kind of dilatoriness could not have been avoided. I am emphatically of opinion that this committee will go a great way to afford the relief which is much needed by the ryots in the interior.

"The hon. the Home Member referred to the question of cost. Very well, Sir, I am for minimising the cost of these committees as far as possible. I shall not mind if you make these members work honorarily. I would ask him, for instance, to include all the representatives sent by those areas as members of this committee. He need not give them any travelling allowance at all. So, Sir, he will be able to get the work done, because fortunately, owing to the Reforms, the electorate or the common people have a machinery whereby they can compel their representatives to work on their behalf. So, the hon. the Home Member need not be afraid that if these appointments are made honorary, there will be none to work. I shall venture to assure him of that.

"I do not think, Sir, the hon. the Home Member has adduced any convincing reasons why my hon. friend's resolution should not be

6th February 1923] [Mr. A. Ranganatha Mudaliyar]

accepted. It may be, Sir, that there are one or two reserves, or one or two districts, where these complaints do not exist; it may be so in the West Coast, for the reserves there are so abundant that there is hardly any complaint regarding them. Again, there may be a district or two with no reserves, and in these cases he need not appoint any committee whatsoever. If he is so inclined, I would propose *after the words* 'for each district' the addition of the words 'except where the Government for special reasons consider unnecessary' so that in all other districts such committees may be appointed."

The hon. the DEPUTY PRESIDENT :—"Does the hon. Member move an amendment?"

Mr. A. RANGANATHA MUDALIYAR :—"Perhaps, I may do it at a later stage; and if I do not move it, somebody else may do it; I simply throw out a suggestion now. For, if the hon. the Home Member wants an amendment for the proposition, he may take it in that form. With these words, Sir, I have great pleasure in associating myself with the mover of this resolution."

Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR :—"I have given notice of an amendment. But before I formally move it, I may just say a few words. So far as the Forest Department is concerned, there is no doubt there is a general feeling that the ryots have to suffer very much at its hands, not in one way or two, but in a number of ways. The Government, indeed, are saying that these hardships—of course they do not deny these hardships—cannot be helped in the interests of future generations, and that the forests must be reserved so as to conserve rainfall, etc. I am not a scientist or an expert, Sir. But, so far as Coimbatore district is concerned, it contains the largest reserve forest and in fact it is one of the largest districts in area of which 2,000 square miles and odd form forest reserves, and yet it gets the least rainfall excepting perhaps Bellary. Therefore, the existence of forests, from the layman's point of view, does not very much contribute to rainfall.

"Secondly, there are certain difficulties so far as grazing and fuel are concerned. As regards forest panchayats, they are still in an experimental stage and so we cannot say very much about them. Our belief is that in the past the forest panchayats have not been very successful because they have not been allowed to be successful by the restrictions and conditions to which they were subject, and the arrangement resulted in negligence which was taken for mismanagement by the officials, although the panchayats could not go against the villagers by enforcing those restrictions. The officials believed in their infallibility and they said that the village forest panchayats did not work well and that the best thing would be to substitute reserve forests. That was their honest view. That may be one of the reasons why the village forest panchayat did not succeed as well as it could have even under the new scheme. My suggestion that it should be placed under the Co-operative, Agricultural or Revenue Department was not accepted and it has been found necessary by the Government to place it subject to the control of the Forest Department itself. Well, however, only time will show whether the new inauguration of a separate department subject to the control of the Chief Conservator of Forests is likely to prove successful. One unfortunate thing is this :—In this department we find that the expenses are almost equal to the income and the 58 or 60 lakhs that are gathered by it are practically spent upon the establishment and on other expenses. There is a very strong

[Mr. C. V. Venkataramana Ayyangar] [6th February 1923]

feeling—and I am one of those who share in that feeling—that the more there is reduction in the establishment of this department, probably the better it would be for these villages. I do not know, Sir, if that cherished object is likely to come up soon. Whatever that may be, there is no doubt as matters stand that we should have some reasonable changes in the way in which this Forest Department is administered. It is, therefore, necessary to sympathise and carry out every resolution that is brought forward in this House for checking the working of the Forest Department.

“ So far as this resolution is concerned, the hon. Member in charge has, referred to me as having given notice and got his consent, 2-45 p.m. though reluctantly, to this amendment. With the experience that we gained in Coimbatore, and also in view of the glaring fact that it is not a transferred subject as it is in Bombay, and the fact that this Council's resolution that every forest within one mile of the occupied area should be disafforested was completely ignored by the Government, and remembering that it is a reserved subject and that the Government can veto the resolution though it is unanimously passed by the House, I suggested in the Advisory Forest Committee that to have something is better than nothing. It is in that view that I discussed the point and requested not only the hon. Member in charge of the department, but also my friend Mr. Muniswami Nayudu to agree to my amendment with the understanding that this should be accepted by Government and committees should be appointed in three or four places, including the district represented by Mr. Muniswami Nayudu. It was on that understanding that this amendment was put in, and it was accepted by both of them. As six days' notice was necessary, I sent up this amendment—otherwise Members would complain that they had not sufficient notice—to the President informing him that both the gentlemen had accepted it and requesting him to permit me to move it. In the Coimbatore district, I must say with the kindness of Mr. Cox who appeared to be very sympathetic—and I believe he is sympathetic so far as the ryots are concerned—we went into the whole question of the various ranges as regards the forest grievances and suggested remedies. The best thing is to have a committee for each district. It is very desirable that instead of a committee roaming about, on one subject each district should have a committee which will enquire into the grievances and suggest remedies. As it is, we find that almost in every place there is a real grievance because the forest area is adjacent to the cultivated area. Wherever we went, we found the grievance, namely, that the line that divided the forest area from the cultivated portion was so small that the cattle were not able to recognize the paper boundary. As soon as the cattle are left free, they run into the adjacent ground because it is green in spite of the attempt of the Forest Department to put regular boundaries. The first thing is that the ryots suffer on account of the ignorance of the cattle—though ignorance of law is no excuse and prosecutions take place because the cattle have trespassed into what is called the reserved forest area which is close to the cultivated area. Therefore we suggested in that committee—the hon. Member has no doubt referred to one portion of it, viz., where specific mention was made of two particular places,—but it was found that it would be difficult to refer to one or two particular areas. So far as the poor ryots are concerned, there is a real difficulty in the disafforestation for one mile. The reason is

6th February 1923] [Mr. C. V. Venkataramana Ayyangar]

this :—As soon as one particular portion between a cultivated area and a reserved area is disafforested, there is a temptation on the part of the ryots to apply for darkhast with the result that the cultivated area gets again very close to the forest area and the same difficulty comes in. Therefore, a large number of poor ryots—there are also some rich ryots—suffer from disafforestation. The disafforested portion should be under the charge of the Forest Department or should be subject to the condition that it should not be given on darkhast or patta to any one. That is a case of course of disafforestation, but still such thing might be found useful so that these particular portions may not be given on patta to the adjacent landholder. Taking all these circumstances into consideration and the fact that this one-mile area covers barren mountains, the Government should at least appoint committees in at least three or four districts. So, I formally move my amendment which runs thus: *For* the words ‘for each district’ *substitute* the words ‘for each of the districts in which the Government may consider it to be useful’.”

Mr. M. R. SETURATNAM AYYAR :—“I second the amendment.”

Rao Babadur A. S. KRISHNA RAO PANTULU :—“Sir, in the first place I wish to say a few words in support of the resolution. I think the honourable mover has done very well in not confining his attention to a particular district, in not specifying Chittoor which he represents, and in bringing to the notice of the House the general grievance pertaining to the whole of this Presidency. Sir, the hon. the Home Member practically invited us to state exactly what the grievances of other districts were in this respect, because he said there were no such grievances felt by other districts. It is that statement of his that impels me to say that grievances are prevalent in most districts of the Presidency. Speaking for my district, I may at once inform him that there has been no grievance which has been more common and persistent than the grievance regarding forest matters. Whenever there are conferences, resolutions are passed drawing the attention of the authorities to the grievances of people in this particular respect. I may also inform the hon. the Home Member that whenever I had an opportunity of going round and having a conference with the inhabitants of villages, the first thing they drew my attention to was the forest grievances. Again, Sir, this very subject about the difficulty of these forest reserves being located within a mile of the village-site or a cultivable land, was the cause for several prosecutions within recent times in criminal courts. These cases were colloquially known as non-co-operation cases, but they were really forest grievances.

“Sir, I shall now give an instance of a conference held by the previous Collector of Nellore. Hardly a year has passed since then. At the instance of this Collector a small conference was held at which a number of ryots and I were present. They placed before the Collector a number of instances in which they had been harrassed on account of the nearness of these forest reserves. Unfortunately or fortunately we have had six or seven Collectors within a few years. (I do not know why.) I am placing this fact before the House because the hon. the Home Member told this House that if it was a grievance really felt in other districts, the representatives of those districts would have come forward clamouring for redress. I have stated, as briefly as I can, the state of affairs in the Nellore district.”

[6th February 1923]

The hon. Mr. A. R. KNAPP :—“ May I offer a word of explanation, Sir ? I did not say that this grievance did not exist in other districts. All that I said was that the shortest way was to allow the aggrieved persons concerned to complain.”

Rao Bahadur A. S. KRISHNA RAO PANTULU :—“ Now, Sir, because the motion of my hon. friend Mr. Muniswami Nayudu was tabled some months ago, it has not been necessary for those from other districts to bring forward separate resolutions. I, therefore, urge upon the attention of this House the necessity for going into this question generally, and dealing with it in the manner it deserves.”

“ I have not been able to follow the objections of the hon. the Home Member for accepting this resolution. So far as I have been able to gather, his objections were three in number. The first was against a general enquiry suggested in this resolution ; the second was that the Committee proposed was a permanent one, not even an *ad hoc* committee. May I point out to him that his acceptance of this resolution and the carrying on of this resolution by the House does not at all place the Government in any inconvenient position ? So long as it is agreed that this grievance is a real and reasonable one, prevalent in most of the districts of the Presidency, the fact that a committee is appointed for the purpose of investigating the cases in each district does not preclude the Government from omitting the districts where there is absolutely no necessity for a committee of this sort. When once the Government are satisfied that the grievance is a real one, these considerations do not stand in the way.

“ Then, Sir, the hon. Member did not specifically say that the committee should be a permanent committee for all time to come. He suggested that a committee might be appointed for any duration of time. It is certainly open to the Government to stipulate the terms and periods for which these committees are to work, and to lay down the necessary conditions. The resolution does not preclude the Government from laying down conditions of that character. Therefore, the House will notice that the objections urged against the acceptance of this resolution are not such as will appeal to this House if the House is satisfied that the grievance is a real one requiring redress.

“ I must say that I am not prepared to agree with Mr. Venkataramana Ayyangar in his amendment. The amendment which he has suggested is so general and so indefinite that it does not take us much further than where we are at present. What he suggests is this :

That this Council recommends to the Government that a committee of which not less than two-thirds shall be non-officials be constituted for each of the districts in which the Government may consider it to be useful.

“ So far as this is concerned, I would submit, even without a resolution of this sort being passed by this House, it is open to the Government to take steps in this direction if it considers it useful. Therefore, Sir, if we carried out some of the observations made by you as the Deputy President in your parts and also of Mr. Ranganatha Mudaliyar, I think it will best serve as an amendment. It is more definite for being placed before the House.

6th February 1923] [Mr. A. S. Krishna Rao Pantulu]

3 p.m. "If you will permit me, Sir, I should like to move the following amendment to the amendment of my hon. friend, Mr. Venkataramana Ayyangar. My amendment is this:

For the words 'for each district' substitute the words 'for each district except in districts where the Government consider it unnecessary for special reasons'.

"My object in moving this amendment is this. If the amendment of my hon. friend, Mr. Venkataramana Ayyangar, is accepted, it will practically give absolute freedom to the Government to appoint committees or not. It will be open for any officer of the Government to state that he does not consider it useful to appoint a committee in a particular district. But if my amendment is accepted, the ordinary rule would be to appoint committees for each district and at the same time giving power to the Government to dispense with the appointment of committees in particular districts for reasons to be recorded. If the House is satisfied that the forest grievances are generally prevalent throughout the Presidency, then I would request the House not to dilute the original resolution by accepting the amendment of my hon. friend, Mr. Venkataramana Ayyangar, but leave it open to the Government to appoint committees for each district except in places where, for satisfactory reasons, they consider it unnecessary. If my amendment is accepted, that only gives some latitude to the Government not to appoint committees for districts where no grievances exist. With your permission I would like to move the above amendment."

Diwan Bahadur M. RAMACHANDRA RAO PANTULU :—"Sir, I beg to second the amendment."

Rao Bahadur T. BALAJI RAO NAYUDU :—"Sir, I beg to oppose both the amendments. Of course the hon. Members, Messrs. Venkataramana Ayyangar and Muniswami Nayudu, are sure that committees will be appointed for their own districts, and that is no reason why they should combine and deprive other districts of the appointment of committees by giving discretion to the Government to appoint or not to appoint committees. The hon. the Home Member need not be afraid that the expenditure for these committees will be very heavy. As suggested by my hon. friend, Mr. Ranganatha Mudaliyar, men will not be wanting to undertake honorary work and thus the Government will not be put to much expense. Under these circumstances, I think that a committee is absolutely necessary for every district where there are reserved forests within a mile of the village-site or the cultivated area."

Mr. M. SURYANARAYANA :—"Sir, I have great pleasure in following my hon. friend, Mr. Balaji Rao Nayudu, and in thinking that no amendment ought to be accepted in regard to this resolution. I agree with my hon. friend, Mr. Muniswami Nayudu, that a committee should be appointed for each district. There is absolutely no good in saying that the Government should be given the discretion to appoint committees only in districts where they consider them necessary. My hon. friend Mr. Krishna Rao's amendment gives the latitude to the Government to dispense with the appointment of committees in districts where, for reasons to be recorded, they consider it unnecessary to appoint them. But I am afraid, Sir, this will not help us either. Who is to examine the sufficiency or the insufficiency of the reasons recorded by the Government for dispensing with the appointment of the

[Mr. M. Suryanarayana]

[6th February 1923]

committees? Supposing the Government give some reasons for not appointing a committee, then are we in a position to examine the sufficiency of the reasons and tell the Government that their decision is wrong, and that they should appoint committees? I do not say that the Government will wilfully do it, but the Government may be advised by their officers that there are not satisfactory reasons for appointing a committee; and it is also quite possible that the Government will accept the recommendation of their own officers.

"So far as the Vizagapatam district from which I come is concerned, it may be said by some that there are no forest grievances. It is perhaps noteworthy to mention that Vizagapatam district is comprised of 14 ordinary taluks and only three out of them are Government taluks and all the others are zamindari taluks. In two of these Government taluks, the people are not only illiterate, but they are also poor. The character of these Agency people is such that at the very sight of an official—be he an European or an Indian, or be he only a mere constable—they are very very much frightened, and they are not able to place their grievances before the official. That is why there have not been any memorials from Narasapatnam and Palakonda taluks regarding the forest grievances. Both these taluks do have reserved forests, and the absence of any memorials is due not to the absence of grievances, but to the cowardly nature of the people at the mere sight of an official.

"As regards the committee that is proposed by the resolution, I am sure that it will not be a costly one. As suggested by my hon. friend, Mr. Ranganatha Mudaliyar, honorary gentlemen will not be wanting to undertake this investigation. With these few words, I have very great pleasure in supporting the original resolution of my hon. friend, Mr. Muniswami Nayudu."

The hon. Mr. A. R. KNAPP:—"May I know, Sir, on what the discussion is proceeding now?"

The hon. the DEPUTY PRESIDENT:—"There are two amendments before the House as well as the original resolution. Hon. Members may speak on any one of them. When putting to vote, I shall put them one by one."

Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR:—"Sir, I do not see any substantial distinction between my amendment and the amendment moved by my hon. friend, Mr. Krishna Rao."

The hon. the DEPUTY PRESIDENT:—"Am I to understand that the hon. Member says that he withdraws his amendment?"

Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR:—"I have no objection to withdraw my amendment if the amendment of my hon. friend, Mr. Krishna Rao, goes in."

The amendment of Mr. Venkataramana Ayyangar was by leave withdrawn.

The hon. the DEPUTY PRESIDENT:—"Now the discussion will proceed on the original resolution and the amendment of the hon. Member, Mr. Krishna Rao."

Mr. V. C. VELLINGIRI GOUNDAR:—"Sir, I rise to make a few observations on the resolution that is now before the House. The object of the resolution of my hon. friend, Mr. Muniswami Nayudu, seems to be to appoint a committee for each district to investigate into certain specific forest

COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE INTO GRIEVANCES OF RYOTS IN RESPECT 1759
OF FOREST RESERVES ADJOINING VILLAGES

6th February 1923] [Mr. V. C. Vellingiri Goundar]

grievances. It is a well known fact, Sir, that the forest grievances are common throughout the Presidency. No doubt the Government are trying their best to remedy all the grievances in several ways: by investigating into them, by issuing orders to their subordinate officers, and by appointing committees. They have been trying their best to get at the root of all the grievances. But with all their endeavours the grievances do not seem to be remedied.

“As the hon. Members are aware, the forest grievances are many and varied. They cannot be remedied all at once. By appointing special committees, by hurrying up the labours of the committees and by asking them to finish their reports within a certain time, not all the grievances can be remedied. I am afraid several grievances will be left unredressed. My suggestion is that a permanent advisory committee should be appointed in all the districts where the forest reserves abound. Then it will be the duty of those committees to discuss with the District Forest Officer or other officers of the Forest Department, the particular grievances arising out of the particular areas of the districts. A number of non-officials might be asked to serve on the advisory committee. From the experience of the committee for our district, I can say that all the forest grievances pertaining to our district have not been remedied. Grievances of ryots vary in several portions of the same district. If we want to go into the question more minutely, we must appoint advisory committees as suggested by me. If special committees are appointed as recommended by the resolution of my hon. friend, Mr. Muniswami Nayudu, they can only make some recommendations and suggest certain lines of work which will be left to the Forest Department to undertake. The Forest Department will be left face to face with the ryots, and in dealing with the recommendations of the special committee, the department will find itself landed in various difficulties. In order that the Forest Department may be constantly advised on the matter, I suggest the appointment of a standing advisory committee, just on the lines that the Abkari Department has. If we appoint a special committee and ask them to finish their labours in a few months, they will not be able to get at the real grievances and suggest remedies for their redress. We should not be satisfied with merely the report of the committee; we must devise a machinery which will be constantly in touch both with ryots and the officers of the Forest Department. It is only want of mutual understanding that has given rise to all the forest grievances. If there is a common platform where all the grievances can be discussed, all these difficulties will disappear. There is no use of simply making disafforestation or classifying the reserves into parts and putting them under forest panchayats. We have heard that not even one panchayat has been doing its work satisfactorily. Therefore my suggestion is that if at all a committee is to be appointed, it should be of the nature of a standing advisory committee which will really solve all the difficulties to the lasting benefit of the ryots. With these few words I support the principle underlying the resolution of my hon. friend, Mr. Muniswami Nayudu.”

Mr. B. MUNISWAMI NAYUDU :—“Sir, I owe a word of explanation to this Council. It is true that this question was discussed by the hon. the Home Member who expressed that there might be difficulties in giving effect to the resolution as it stood because there were certain districts like Malabar where people would not like disafforestation in view of the fact that they have to live in forest areas themselves.

3.15 p.m.

[Mr. B. Muniswami Nayudu]

[6th February 1923]

Possibly there may be one or two districts in which no complaints exist. With a view to meet difficulties of that sort, namely, the possibility of there being no grievances in certain districts, my hon. friend Mr. Venkataramana Ayyangar has suggested the amendment giving discretion to the Government to appoint committees for only those districts where they consider them necessary. I think as a member of the Standing Advisory Committee I represent not merely the interests of the district which I represent but also the whole Council. No doubt it was stated that Chittoor and Coimbatore might be taken as typical instances where the scheme could be worked out successfully. But I thought if I accepted the amendment of my hon. friend Mr. Venkataramana Ayyangar without consulting the House, it would amount to selfishness on my part. With that view I consulted several hon. Members as to whether the amendment proposed would be acceptable to them and a large number of these were of opinion that it ought not to be accepted. Therefore it was that I could not make up my mind to accept the amendment, nor to refer to it in my opening speech on the resolution. I wanted to know the entire opinion of the House before I could make up my mind to accept the amendment or not. I thought it would not be fair on the part of two hon. Members of this House, like Mr. Venkataramana Ayyangar, and myself to arrange between ourselves about a particular question and dictate to the House what they should accept. The amended resolution would in effect only mean a committee for my district of Chittoor and another for the district of Coimbatore which my hon. friend represents. I thought that would not be a fair proposal for this House to accept. I would therefore leave the amendment entirely in the hands of this House; I do not want to take any responsibility on myself by saying anything in the nature of a selfish desire to serve my own purpose.

“Well, Sir, I suppose I have to reply generally on the proposition. I am glad that my hon. friend, Mr. Vellingiri Goundar, though in the beginning of his speech he seemed to oppose my resolution, has really supported me by suggesting the appointment of permanent advisory committees. I am glad he said that a roving committee would be absolutely necessary. We have got at the expense of the tax-payer a roving committee to consider the grievances of the Imperial officers. I want the appointment of a committee which would really go into the legitimate grievances of the ryots and redress them. I cannot understand how the Government can come forward with the excuse of burden to the tax-payer in the appointment of committees intended to redress the grievances of poor ryots.

“As hon. Members are aware, last year, for the first time, we consented to burden the tax-payers to the extent of Rs. 35,000 by way of appointing special panchayat officers and six inspectors. Of course we acceded to the above proposal in the belief that it would really redress all the forest grievances. We shall be glad to hear from the hon. the Home Member as to what substantial work these panchayats have turned out. I am afraid they cannot show any solid work to their credit to justify their appointments. Under the circumstances there can possibly be no objection to incur a small expenditure by way of appointing committees in each district for the purpose of investigating into the real grievances of ryots.

“Before I close, I wish to refer to one other point, viz., the reason for suggesting the appointment of committees for each and every district. This

6th February 1923] [Mr. B. Muniswami Nayudu]

Council is not issuing orders to the Government to constitute committees for each and every district. This resolution is only in the nature of a recommendation to the Government who may accept it to the extent to which they think it necessary. My resolution definitely states that the business of these committees is not merely to recommend disafforestation but also to suggest other suitable methods for redressing other grievances wherever they exist. I do not think there is any district where there are absolutely no grievances at all. I do not think that even in Malabar to which the hon. the Home Member has referred, people are thoroughly satisfied with the forest administration. There must certainly be some grievances and the only thing necessary is to investigate them and suggest remedies. The duty of the committees I propose will be not merely to recommend disafforestation, but, wherever disafforestation is not necessary, to suggest other means of remedying grievances. For these reasons, I submit, that my original resolution may be accepted."

Rao Bahadur A. S. KRISHNA RAO PANTULU :— "I think I may probably clear the House of a certain amount of misconception in the discussion of the hon. Member's original resolution. I put forward my amendment in the hope that it would meet with the acceptance of the hon. the mover and also that of the hon. the Home Member. It will be clear that when I started to give my hearty support to the resolution, different views were expressed by members, and because of the divergence of those views, I thought it would meet with the general acceptance of the House if I moved an amendment like the one I have moved. But now as hon. Members have neither expressed their disagreement, nor have indicated that they will accept it, and as neither the hon. mover, nor the hon. the Home Member, has given his views on it, I crave permission to withdraw it."

The amendment was by leave withdrawn.

The hon. Mr. A. R. KNAPP :—"I should like, if I may, to quote the words of one of our Standing Order which says :

the discussion of a resolution shall be strictly limited to the subject of the resolution.

"Now Sir, the subject of this resolution is :

That this Council recommends to investigate all cases where forest reserves lie within a mile of either the village site or the cultivated area of a village and to make recommendations to Government suggesting either the disafforestation of such areas or other suitable action to be taken to redress the grievances of ryots.

But the discussion has ranged over the whole or almost the whole of our forest policy and in another direction has carried us as far back as 1892. I do not propose to follow hon. Members in either of those directions.

"The request in the resolution is quite clear. My difficulty is, and the hon. mover of the resolution must recognize it, that on behalf of Government I am not prepared to accept his resolution which really means that every district should have a committee. That is the only interpretation that can be put on the wording of the resolution. I have stated already, and I repeat it again, that if there is any need in any particular district, I am quite prepared to appoint a committee. I mentioned at the outset that when we discussed the very same matter in the year 1921, and when 13 members spoke on the resolution, there was a very considerable divergence of opinion. I notice exactly the same feature this time. While some hon. Members want special bodies to enquire into the question of the proximity of forests

[Mr. A. R. Knapp]

[6th February 1923]

to villages, others seem to ask for permanent standing advisory committees, one for each district to deal not only with the question of proximity of reserves to cultivable areas but with the whole of the forest policy of the district. That, Sir, I think, illustrates the differences of opinion. It is not at all surprising for there is not likely to be any unanimity of opinion because the conditions of different districts are different. It is on that ground that I oppose any such idea as the universal establishment of these committees all over the presidency.

"Now, Sir, you yourself and the hon. Mr. A. Ranganatha Mudaliyar brought to notice that in many cases complaints were left unnoticed. At the same time it was admitted that the representations made have led to disafforestation in many cases. That at least is a matter for satisfaction. All I can say is that in regard to the two specific complaints which were brought to my notice I shall lose no time in having the cases further looked into. My general belief is that the forest officer is perfectly ready to inquire into grievances that are brought to his notice, but to expect that every grievance that is brought to his notice will be redressed in the manner in which the petitioner expects it to be redressed would be Utopian.

"I do not think I need say anything more. I am rather glad that the amendment has been withdrawn. I should have accepted it with some hesitation, for I quite realized that there might be a danger of misunderstanding the exact basis on which the amendment would be accepted, and, for that reason, I preferred to have a plain issue laid before this House—a plain issue as to whether we are or are not to set up a universal system of committees in every district of the Presidency to investigate the questions of the proximity of forest reserves to villages."

The resolution was put and carried.

3-30 p.m.

The following resolutions were not moved and were therefore deemed to have been withdrawn:—

Introduction of avarai plants into poramboke lands.

Mr. R. APPASWAMI NAYUDU:—

49. *That this Council recommends to the Government that the rearing of the avarai plant should be introduced into the poramboke and waste lands of villages so as to be useful to the ryots for the purpose of cultivation.*

AMENDMENT

Notice has been received of the following amendment:—

Resolution No. 49.

Mr. A. RANGANATHA MUDALIYAR:—

For the words 'introduced into' in line 2 substitute the words 'encouraged wherever practicable in'.

Committee to inquire into the causes of the Mappilla rebellion.

Dr. P. SUBBARAYAN:—

50. *That this Council recommends to the Government that a committee of officials and non-officials be appointed to inquire into and report on the cause of the Mappilla rebellion in Malabar, and to inquire into the way in which martial law was administered in the rebel area and to further make recommendations as to the steps to be taken to stop the occurrence of such outbreaks.*